CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

INFORMATION REPORT

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COUNTRY		Czechoslovakia	REPORT				25 X 1
SUBJECT 1.		Living Conditions in the Decin Area Health and Medicine	DATE DISTR.		13 April		1 1953
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- 1. The shortage of potatoes and vegetables in the Decin area worsened when the winter of 1952-53 came. The price of potatoes on the free market is 400 Kcs. per metric hundredweight and it is rumored that it will be increased to 600 Kcs. for the remainder of the winter. Vegetables of any kind are practically unobtainable because nearly all available supplies go to workers, canteens and factory messes. Lines of 200 to 300 people can be seen very often outside grocery stores, waiting for the store manager to come back with supplies from the distribution centers. But he usually returns with very little and the vegetables are rationed at ½ or ½kg. per person as long as they last.
- 2. There is also a shortage of milk and distribution is very poor. Dried milk, Sunar, for small children, which is bought at the controlled price of 180 Kcs. for five tins with a doctor's prescription, is also unobtainable although there is plenty of it on the free market at 100 Kcs. per tin. It was rumored that rationing would end on 1 January 1953, the free market would be discontinued and prices would be set somewhere between the present rationed and free market prices.
- 3. The families of workers with grownup children where the whole family can work are well off. Such families have a monthly income of 10,000 to 20,000 Kcs. and are able to buy many goods on the free market; they can all eat their midday meals in the factory canteen and have to provide only the evening meal at home. But families with small children where only the husband works are very badly off and have to live on their rations only, as they cannot afford to spend anything in the free market with a monthly income of only 4,000 to 5,000 Kcs. per month.
- 4. The great majority of the workers approves the nationalization of key industries such as heavy industry, mines, power stations, etc. But as far as the nationalization of medium and small enterprises and the industries producing consumer goods is concerned the workers can see the disadvantages from their own experience. Every bit of work is done in accordance with the norm or on a piecework basis, so the workers have to produce as much as possible if they want to earn good wages. The quality of the goods the worker can buy is very poor and the prices are high.

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- 5. Although attendance at political indoctrination classes may ostensibly be voluntary, the names of those missing from the lectures are noted and sooner or later one must face the consequences, usually transfer to a lower paid job. Also, recruiting campaigns for various organizations are carried on by door to door canvassers on Sundays and many people join simply because they are afraid to refuse and because they think they will be able to have a little peace afterwards. But once they have joined they must attend meetings and various other activities. If they do not they are publicly reprimended and even expelled.
- 6. Party members and functionaries have a number of privileges which ordinary workmen can see. In the factories they are usually assigned to work which is highly paid and even if they do the same work as others they receive higher wages. In some factories this has been brought up at workers! meetings. Workers demanded that the management publish the wages of all employees, but the party representatives advised against it. Promotions to better jobs are also more frequent among the Party members than among non-members.
- 7. The housing shortage is not as severe in border areas as it is farther inland. Rent for two or three-room apartments is 200 to 500 Kcs. per month. Buildings which have not been occupied since 1945, when the Germans left, have deteriorated and are practically uninhabitable. Very few repairs have been made since 1945 because of the shortage of building materials and labor.
- 8. The shortage of medical supplies is still very severe. Doctors usually prescribe two or three alternative medicines and the patient even then has to try several pharmacies before he is able to get one of them. The shortage of beds in hospitals is acute and in some hospitals two patients have to share one bed. Patients are also released too soon from the hospitals in order to make room for others. Medical supplies go first to the factories and then to the dealers selling to the general public. Even such ordinary medicines as aspirin and iodine are hard to obtain. As a result, the health of the population is deteriorating rapidly and epidemics usually result in a large number of deaths. Doctors in large factories are constantly being warned that absences due to illness must be reduced and consequently they are often afraid to send a sick person to the hospital.

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